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COMOR-D-13/39

1 March 1965  
BYE-26023/65(Navy)

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From: Navy Member, Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance  
To: Chairman, Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance

Subject: Sea Surveillance by Earth Satellite Vehicles

1. Navy and Air Force personnel and the (S) NRO for some time have been studying problems of world-wide sea surveillance. (S) NRO has concluded that it is feasible to contribute to sea surveillance by earth satellite vehicles, and that necessary capabilities should be incorporated into the [redacted] under the jurisdiction of the (S) NRO. Before the (S) NRO expends (TS) NRP funds for further development and adaptation of capability for sea surveillance, the intelligence requirement for such a capability must receive USIB approval.

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2. While the general threat from missile launching submarines and surface ships at sea is easy to recognize, there are also other national intelligence requirements for current position and identification data on other ships and craft engaged in military, intelligence collection, or clandestine activities. Under conditions of cold war the movement of such less obviously identifiable threats may be of particular national and military concern because they may be indicators. The extensive operations to locate and identify Soviet missile-transporting merchant ships enroute to Cuba in the summer of 1962, and subsequent efforts to report on suspect arms carriers elsewhere in the world illustrate national intelligence requirements for effective sea surveillance. At present most intelligence on naval and maritime movements is derived from [redacted] port observers, accredited diplomatic personnel, and air and surface surveillance of strategic water areas by naval forces. In times of tension and [redacted] most of these sources become less effective or may be diverted to other tasks, while the needs for current national and tactical intelligence become more critical.

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3. The intelligence requirements for sea surveillance include identification and tracking of those targets which can threaten U.S. forces or our allies, or engage in operations affecting U.S. national interests. They are:

- a. Nuclear and conventional submarines.
- b. Missile launching cruisers, destroyers, and smaller craft such as OSA and KOMAR boats.

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c. Merchant ships over 1000 gross register tons.

d. Certain smaller craft down to 100 gross register tons equivalent, such as signal intelligence collection trawlers, high speed raiders, and clandestine agent transports.

Sea surveillance of such targets, once identified, should be able to provide current data on position within 50 nautical miles, course within  $\pm 25^\circ$ , speed  $\pm 5$  knots, and be at least 90% effective in continuous reporting.

4. While this requirement is essentially national, it should be noted that the position, movements, and identity of all ships and submarines in a particular area also has major tactical significance. Expeditious collection and dissemination of such tactical data do however determine the effectiveness of forces in entire theaters of operations, and have major strategic consequences. This requirement should be regarded as both of strategic and tactical importance.

5. For the information of COMOR, it is estimated that a satellite surveillance system to contribute to satisfaction of these requirements calls for extensive technical capabilities. Effective sea surveillance of maritime targets which can be positioned over two thirds of the earth's surface, and move unpredictably within their speed capabilities, may require means for rapid, repeated, all-weather, night-or-day location and identification of seaborne surface and subsurface targets, to distinguish specific targets of interest from among the many ships and craft at sea. Without prejudging, (S) NRO considers such a system might include:

a. Multiple sensors such as [ ] means to command moored sonobuoys, infra-red, and radar, optical observation equipment, and photo systems of adequate resolution to record observations;

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b. Processing and command/communications equipment;

c. Compatibility with data processing systems to permit rapid analysis and transmission of intelligence to users.

6. Since a sea surveillance requirement involves such a specific combination of elements, since so few persons have access to [ ] and since (S) NRO can proceed with planned action as soon as the requirement is approved, it is recommended COMOR submit this requirement to USIB at the earliest opportunity, and not attempt to present it with other long range requirements.

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signed

B. L. Garbow

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